BROKEN FLOWERS

By

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FADE UP ON:

EXT. SUBURBAN MAILBOX - DAY

A gloved female hand pulls open the metal door to a generic mailbox, while the other hand, also gloved, holds an envelope. It is pale pink and addressed in red ink, with a stamp depicting a bird. Sunlight momentarily illuminates the envelope.

The gloved hands deposit the letter and release the mailbox door. It swings shut with a dull metallic bang.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. SUBURBAN MAILBOX - DAY

A mail truck is parked in front of the mailbox on a suburban street corner. A uniformed mail carrier transfers mail from the mailbox into a canvas mailbag. He locks the mailbox, places the canvas bag among others like it in the mail truck, then drives away.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

A large number of letters pass by on the sorting conveyor of a postal facility. Among them is the PINK ENVELOPE addressed in red with a bird stamp in its corner. It passes from view, carried away in the river of mail.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. SKY - DUSK

A postal airplane cuts across a darkening sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - AFTERNOON

A female mail carrier crosses lawns in a generic neighborhood that, by the current state of its small, similarly-designed houses, has seen better days.

She pushes some mail through a slot in a door, then moves towards the next house. On its square front lawn, several small, dark-skinned children are playing. They stop for a moment, watching her shyly, as she deposits some mail in a basket on their narrow cement porch, then moves on toward a tall hedge bordering the next lawn.

This next house is different from the others on the street: its dark walls are protected by overgrown bushes, and it is larger and more "modern" than the others.

The mail carrier walks through a hedge and up the brick steps to the stone porch while sifting letters in her hand. She slides the mail through a brass slot in the large oak door--along with several generic bills is the PINK ENVELOPE addressed in red ink.

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER - AFTERNOON

The PINK ENVELOPE, along with several other white ones, lands quietly on the tiled floor of the house's interior foyer.

From a sunken living room beyond the foyer, DON JOHNSTON has distantly noticed the mail arriving. He is in his early 50's, dressed in a green track suit with yellow stripes down the legs and sleeves, and is sitting on a sofa which seems to float above a matching carpet.

Matching chairs flank the sofa, and in front of him, beyond a Moroccan coffee table, a large TV screen flickers with the sound turned down. The house is clean, minimal, and somehow conveys the feeling of a bachelor pad a decade or two out of date.

DON's eyes drift from the arriving mail, back to the TV, then toward the windows which encircle the sunken room.

Someone can be heard descending a staircase at the far end of the foyer. An attractive woman appears (SHERRY, early 30's, blonde, dressed in a designer suit with a tight skirt and high heels).

She sets a small, wheelable suitcase and several other bags down on the tiled floor of the foyer, and stands facing Don.

SHERRY
I pretty much have all my stuff.

Don looks over at her from his sofa, then stands and approaches her.

Sherry bends down and picks up the mail from the foyer floor. She shuffles through the letters, carefully placing the pink one on top. Don arrives next to her.

They make eye contact, as Sherry hands him the mail, the pink envelope facing up.

SHERRY (cont'd)
Looks like you got a letter from one of your other girlfriends.

DON
I don't have any other girlfriends. (pause) C'mon, Sherry.

He moves to embrace her but she petulantly backs away.

DON (cont'd)
Alright. I get it.

SHERRY
No, you don't. (pause) But that's okay. You're just who you are, and you're never gonna change. (pause) I just don't think I want to be with...with an over-the-hill Don Juan anymore.

DON
Ouch.

He tosses his mail on the floor, the pink envelope landing on top.

DON (cont'd)
What do you want, Sherry?

SHERRY
What do you want, Don? I'm like your mistress, except you're not even married, you know? I mean, don't you ever want a family, like your friend Winston next door? They seem to have a lot of fun over there.

DON
Well...why? Is that what you want?

SHERRY
I don't know what I want. (pause) I guess I just want to figure that out by myself.

DON
By yourself...

SHERRY
Yeah. Maybe I'll call you sometime. (pause) You want to know what your problem is Don?

DON
What?

SHERRY
You're never in the present moment anymore. You're somewhere else. Over there on your sofa.

Don watches blankly as Sherry opens the door and wheels her suitcase outside. A moment later he moves out the doorway after her.

DON
Sherry?

Without turning toward him, she pauses and waits momentarily. When Don doesn't respond, she gives a small, dramatic wave back at him before proceeding to the driveway.

She loads her bags into small white car then gets in. Don waves back, but it's way too late. He watches as she backs the white Jetta out of the driveway, and sails away.

When the car is out of sight, DON closes the door, turns and solemnly descends back into the sunken living room. He sits down on the sofa, staring at the floor, then at the TV screen:

A black and white film is on: THE PRIVATE LIFE OF DON JUAN, 1934, with Douglas Fairbanks. DON watches silently: a lavish, overwrought funeral scene, fourteenth century Seville, with dozens of veiled young women in mourning, many carrying flowers.

DON's eyes stay on the screen, as he instinctively reaches for a portable phone on the Moroccan table. He dials a number.

Another image of Don Juan's funeral flickers across the TV screen and DON speaks into phone.

DON (cont'd)
Hello? Julie? (pause) No, it's me, Don. (pause) Yeah, how are you? (pause) It has been a while. But, listen, would you like to have dinner together later? (longer pause) You're married? (pause) Well, I hope he's a good guy. (pause) Yeah, that's great. Congratulations. (pause) So, uh, what are you guys doing tonight? maybe we could all...Julie? Hello?

He switches off the phone, setting it back down on the table. His eyes drift back to the TV screen as he turns the sound on with a remote.

On the screen a crying woman in black funeral veils walks away from DON JUAN and his middle aged VALET.

DON JUAN (ONSCREEN)
It's amazing. I had no idea my own funeral could be so...delightful.

VALET (ONSCREEN)
It certainly brought your career to a happy end.

DON JUAN
End? Why end?

VALET
Why not? Leave off while they still think of you as you were.

DON JUAN
Were?

VALET
Ten years ago--before these wrinkles, these lines, these gray hairs.

DON JUAN
You'd spoil any party. Even a funeral.

A flock of female mourners with enormous bouquets ascends an exterior stone staircase...

DON turns the sound off and sinks back into the sofa. He looks over at a vase of pale roses Sherry has left by the fireplace, studying them for a moment before his eyes drift back toward the front windows of his living room.

FADE TO BLACK.

UNDER BLACK:

After a pause, a phone rings.

FADE UP ON:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

DON is asleep, stretched out on the couch, still dressed in the red track suit. Morning light floods the room. On the coffee table a portable phone is ringing. Beyond the windows, wind moves green tree branches, their motion in contrast to the stillness in the room.

DON opens his eyes. Half asleep, he reaches for the phone.

DON (INTO PHONE)
Yeah, hi Winston. You at work? (pause) It's Saturday? (pause) No, yeah, I...just woke up. (a longer pause) Well, did you try to access it with a code? (pause) Huh. Yeah, OK. I'll be right over. (pause) Yeah, a cup of coffee would be good.

He switches off the phone and slowly sits up. For a moment he stares vacantly at a silent cartoon image on the TV, then turns it off with the remote and rises to his feet.

DON crosses the room and steps up into the foyer. As he opens the door, his eyes are drawn to the mail SHERRY had placed on the small table, including the PINK ENVELOPE. DON picks up the letters, he looks blearily at the PINK ENVELOPE as he steps outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. DON'S HOUSE/WINSTON'S HOUSE - DAY

His eyes still on the letters in his hand, DON squeezes through the tall hedge and enters the neighboring yard. It's the yard of his best friend, WINSTON.

There are plastic toys strewn across the lawn where two small, dark-skinned children are playing.

RITA, a four year old, lights up when she sees DON.

RITA
(smiling devilishly)
Good morning, Mr. Don!

DON
Good morning, Mr. Rita.

DON steps onto the porch and opens the door.

RITA
(laughing)
I'm not Mr. Rita, silly!

CUT TO:

INT. WINSTON'S HOUSE - DAY

Looking up from the mail he's holding, DON enters WINSTON's house. Its interior is the polar opposite of DON's house--small and chaotic, with colorful walls, neatly maintained but with stuff everywhere.

Several more children are playing on the floor of the narrow entranceway. DON steps over them as MONA (WINSTON'S wife) appears, smiling. She is short and dark with a radiant smile, and holds out a cup of coffee for DON.

DON
Good morning.

MONA
(laughing softly)
Winston is in the back room on the computer. In his office.

She laughs again. DON takes the cup of coffee, then moves past her down a narrow hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. WINSTON'S OFFICE - DAY

WINSTON looks up from his computer screen as DON enters the room. WINSTON is dark-skinned, around 40, fit and energetic if a little tired-looking. (He and his wife are Ethiopian.) His nappy hair is slightly long and wild, and he wears green factory-style coveralls.

The room is small and lined with bookshelves containing mostly paperback detective fiction. On the walls, several posters are visible--one with Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes, another with Humphrey Bogart as Philip Marlowe. There are also brightly colored record covers displayed--Ethiopian pop music from the sixties and seventies, and a framed portrait of Haile Selassie.

DON
What's up, Winston?

WINSTON
Hey, Don. Thanks, man. Listen, I just can't seem to access this site. I need your computer expertise.

DON sets down his coffee and looks over WINSTON's shoulder at the computer screen.

DON
What is it?

WINSTON
It's like a system for breaking down the plots of detective fiction, or the solution of crimes. Supposedly one could use it to write a mystery novel, or solve a mystery, or a complicated crime...

DON leans over him and starts pushing keys on the computer. A moment later, he has accessed the site.

DON
Go crazy, Sherlock.

WINSTON
Fantastic! That's how you do it. Cool. Thank you, Don. This is my kind of information, man.

While WINSTON is fully absorbed in the computer, DON sits down on a wooden folding chair and looks at the PINK ENVELOPE. He takes a sip of coffee, then slowly opens it.

WINSTON (cont'd)
(His eyes riveted to the screen)
I love the net, man. You sure you still don't want a computer in your house?

DON carefully slides the letter, a single folded pink sheet, from the envelope.

DON
Nah.

WINSTON
Seems awful strange to me. A guy who made all his money in computer stuff doesn't even have one any more...

Not really listening, DON has unfolded the letter and is reading it. When he has finished, he looks carefully at the envelope, then rereads the letter.

While WINSTON scrolls through more information, DON stares listlessly off into space.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Man, this is fascinating. I'm gonna print this out.

He looks over at DON.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Hey. Don, you alright?

DON
(not looking at him)
What?

WINSTON
What's wrong?

DON again looks at the PINK LETTER.

DON
(distantly)
It's probably nothing...

WINSTON studies him.

WINSTON
Ah. A love letter from one of your ladies?

DON
Well, not exactly. (pause) I'll read it to you. It's typewritten. Unsigned. (he begins reading aloud)
"Dear Don, Sometimes life brings some strange surprises. It's been almost twenty years since we've seen each other, but now there's something I need to tell you.
Years ago, after our story ended, I discovered I was pregnant. I decided to go through with the pregnancy, and I had a baby. A son. Your son. I decided to raise him by myself because our time together had come to a close.
My son is now almost nineteen. He's somewhat shy and secretive unlike you, but a sensitive, wonderful person. A few days ago he left on a mysterious 'road trip', but I'm almost certain he's searching for his father. I've told him almost nothing about you, but he's resourceful and imaginative.
Anyway, if this is in fact your correct address, well, I just felt I should let you know. "

DON looks up from the letter.

DON (cont'd)
That's it. No signature, no return address.

WINSTON
Congratulations! You're a father.

DON looks at him sourly.

WINSTON (cont'd)
You're really upset by this. (pause) Can I see it?

DON hands him the letter and the PINK ENVELOPE.

WINSTON (cont'd)
(examining the letter and envelope)
Your address is handwritten, but printed.

He holds the envelope under a lamp, and picks up a magnifying glass.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Damn. The postmark is too faint to read! That's fucked up.

WINSTON then closely examines the letter itself.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Typewriter...any ideas who it's from?

DON
Nope. None. (pause) Probably just a hoax, ya know?

WINSTON
But you had a lotta girls back then, no? I mean, you're still a player, but from what I know, you were like, you know, Casanova. (pause) Like Don Juan or something.

DON looks into space, troubled.

DON
(to himself)
Don Juan...

Slowly he stands up.

DON (cont'd)
I gotta go.

WINSTON
(getting up)
You want me to keep the letter? Study it for forensic evidence, for clues?

DON
(very distracted)
Uh. Sure. Whatever.

He moves robotically through the door, leaving the room. WINSTON sits back down, studying the letter with his magnifying glass.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. DON'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

DON, still in his red tracksuit, is sitting on his sofa, static, staring into space. The room is softly lit by several lamps, the light beyond the windows a darkening blue.

Slow, tragic classical music seeps from the speakers of DON's sound system.

The doorbell rings.

DON looks over at his front door, but says nothing. The door opens and WINSTON walks in.

WINSTON
It's me!

DON
Yeah, I see that.

WINSTON, holding the PINK LETTER, steps down into the living room. He walks over to the stereo and turns the music down a little, then sits in a chair near DON. The two men sit there for a moment, not speaking.

WINSTON
Man, it's kinda lonely in here.

There's a long pause. WINSTON places the PINK ENVELOPE on the Moroccan coffee table. DON looks over at it while WINSTON looks around the room.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Is Sherry comin' over?

DON
No, she's...she left.

WINSTON
Sherry left? On a trip?

DON
No. I mean she left.

WINSTON
(Visibly disappointed)
I'm sorry, man.

DON
Yeah. Me too, I think.

Don's attention drifts away.

WINSTON
Well, Sherry probably hasn't played her last card yet, right?

DON
Probably not.

WINSTON
Anyway, you've never had trouble finding interesting females. You've had many queens, man. You're like Bob Marley!

Don gives him an odd look.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Yeah, man. Your life has been like that, though. You're like...Don Juan.

DON
(half to himself)
Winston, please stop saying that.

Another long pause.

WINSTON
About the letter. You, uh, you thought about who the mother could be?

DON looks at him blankly.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Cuz I looked at the postmark under my microscope and it's really faded, so I'm not sure, but I think it's from the Coast. (pause) And that's where you lived, like, twenty years ago, right?

DON nods.

WINSTON (cont'd)
The stamp's got a woodpecker on it. What does that mean? Any idea?

Don shakes his head.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Well, what I think we gotta do is try to narrow down the possibilities. You gotta make a list of who the mother could be, then I'll track down where they are now, see?

DON
And then what? Look, Winston, it's probably someone playing a joke on me. And if not, well whatever.

WINSTON
Don, I think you should go and check it out. It's not fair to write a letter like that and not sign it. Man, don't you wanna know who's the mother of your son?

DON
My theoretical son. No, Winston, I don't wanna know. OK?

WINSTON is visibly disappointed.

WINSTON
OK. (pause) We can just drop it.

DON
Good.

WINSTON
OK. It's dropped.

After a pause, WINSTON gets up to leave, then just stands there for a moment.

WINSTON (cont'd)
I think you need to do something like this. You gotta take this as a sign.

DON
A sign of what?

WINSTON
Of the direction of your life. Of the present moment. This is your life, man! You really need to solve this mystery and find out which of your women...

DON
Winston.

WINSTON walks over to DON's stereo and ejects the CD that's been playing.

WINSTON
Where's that groovin CD I burned for you?

He locates the CD in a stack near the stereo and puts it in. Eerie Ethiopian jazz/funk from the early 70's washes into the room.

WINSTON steps up into the foyer and opens the door, turning back to DON.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Come over for Sunday brunch tomorrow. (then, smiling) We can talk a little more about our plan of investigation.

DON
Go home. Leave me alone.

WINSTON
Love you too.

The door closes. DON sits alone in his sunken living room. He looks at the PINK LETTER resting on the table. In front of him, the windows have gone blue-black, the room awash in the funky, mysterious music.

FADE TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. WINSTON'S HOUSE - DAY

DON, now wearing a black tracksuit otherwise identical to his red one, is sitting on the edge of WINSTON's porch in the Sunday afternoon sunlight. Standing next to him is RITA, WINSTON's four year old daughter.

DON
I think your father's real name is Sam Spade.

RITA
My father isn't Sam Spade!

DON
No? Is he Sherlock Holmes?

RITA
No!

DON
Philip Marlowe?

RITA
No!

DON
Is he John Shaft?

RITA
No, he's not!

DON
Mike Hammer?

RITA
(laughing)
No! Not Mike Hammer!

DON
Dolemite!

RITA
No!!

WINSTON emerges from the house, followed by MONA. DON stands up as she deposits other small children in the yard.

DON
Thank you, Mona. That was delicious.

MONA
(smiling)
You're always welcome here. You know that.

DON
Thank you. You're the most perfect woman in the world.

WINSTON
You hear, darlin'? And he oughta know.

DON kisses MONA's hand. She smiles, a little shyly, then goes back inside the house.

WINSTON takes a handrolled cigarette and some matches from the pocket of his coveralls. He steps off the porch and, followed by DON, enters a shaded area near the hedge bordering DON's house.

WINSTON (cont'd)
So, I'd like to look at the pink letter again. Can I see it?

DON watches him light the cigarette and inhale deeply.

DON
I burned it. Last night. (pause) It's gone.

WINSTON's young daughter, RITA, has reappeared and now stands in front of them. She stares intently at her father, amusingly.

WINSTON
What is it, little Rita?

RITA
Papa, you're smoking again.

WINSTON
Nah, this is only herb. Cheeba.

RITA looks at him suspiciously. WINSTON holds the cigarette under DON's nose. He takes a sniff of smoke, then makes a sour expression.

DON
That's marijuana.

WINSTON
You see there? It's just a little indigo, honey.

RITA
Well, OK, I guess. Cuz mama says no more smoking tobacco anymore. Never.

WINSTON
Yeah, I gave it up, little darlin'! No more tobacco. I promise.

For the time being, RITA is satisfied and disappears.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Don, come on. Let me see the mysterious pink letter for a second.

DON hesitates, then pulls the envelope out from inside his black track jacket and hands it to WINSTON.

WINSTON carefully extracts the letter, unfolds it, peruses it.

WINSTON (cont'd)
(his eyes on the letter)
OK. What you gotta do now is make me a list.

DON
A list?

WINSTON
You gotta give me the possibilities of who the mother is. It says, "After our story ended, I had a baby." You had a story with her. I need a list, man. Then I can plan everything.

DON
I'm goin' home, Sherlock. Just burn that letter when you're through with it.

DON disappears through the hedge.

WINSTON
(still looking at the letter, calling after him)
Work on that list!

CUT TO BLACK

FADE UP ON

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lost in thought, DON is sitting on his sofa, more odd atmospheric Ethiopian funk playing quietly on his system.

After a short, static period, DON leans forward and writes a name on a piece of paper on the coffee table. It's the fifth name in a list, several with a few notes scrawled next to them.

DON leans back into the sofa, the music drifting around him.

The phone rings several times before DON once again leans forward and answers it. He listens for a moment before responding.

DON
(into phone)
Hello, Winston. (pause) What list? (pause) No, I haven't even thought about it. Are you on a cell phone?

DON looks toward his front door. It opens, and WINSTON enters, talking into a cellphone.

WINSTON
(into phone, stepping down into the living room)
Is it OK if I just run in and get the list?

DON
(into his phone)
Sure. Why not?

WINSTON
(into cell phone as he approaches DON)
Great. Hold on a second?

He now stands next to DON, leaning over and looking at the list on the coffee table. His hand over his cell, he speaks directly to DON.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Any other info on where they might be?

DON
(directly to WINSTON)
No, not really. Just where they lived then, if I could remember.

WINSTON
(picking up the piece of paper)
Good. Cool.

He turns and heads back toward the door, once again speaking into his cell phone.

WINSTON (cont'd)
(into phone)
Sorry about that. OK. I'll be all over this, man. The day after tomorrow, I should have everything ready.

DON watches blankly as WINSTON closes the door behind him, taking DON's list home.

DON
(into phone)
Knock yourself out. (pause)
Winston?

He switches off the phone and replaces it on the table.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DON'T LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Don is alone in his living room listening to music. An untouched glass of champagne sits on the Moroccan table in front of him.

FADE UP ON:

INT. LUNCHEONETTE - DAY

WINSTON is sitting at a table near the window in a generic luncheonette. He looks around in anticipation, then shuffles through a folder of papers.

DON arrives, now wearing a green tracksuit, otherwise identical to his others. He slides into the bench across from his friend.

WINSTON
Man, my lunch break's almost over, Don.

DON
Sorry. What's up?

WINSTON opens the folder and its contents and pushes it over to DON.

WINSTON
I got all the info in here, plus the whole plan. I got their address and married names, in several cases their jobs.

DON looks at the papers, dumbfounded.

WINSTON (cont'd)
I got some sad news, though.

DON
What?

WINSTON
That girl named Michelle Pepe. She died in a car accident. It was five years ago. On the coast. (pause) I found the cemetery where she...where she is.

Silence. DON is visibly upset.

DON
Little Michelle Pepe?

Another pause.

WINSTON
Yeah. I'm sorry. (pause) But the other four--I got all their info.

DON
Well, that's impressive, Winston. But I really don't know why you did all this. I mean, what do you expect me to do about it?

WINSTON
Look!

He pulls up an itinerary from among the papers.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Your trip is all planned, booked, reservations, rental cars. It's all worked out. You just give em a credit card, and that's it.

DON
What are you talking about?

WINSTON
You go visit them! You go to their houses. You see them! You bring flowers. Pink flowers! (pause) And you act like you're just checking in.

DON
Just checkin' in...

WINSTON
Yeah! Look, I even got maps in here. Everything you're gonna need.

DON, incredulous, looks through WINSTON's elaborate preparations.

A WAITRESS appears at the table.

DON
(to waitress)
Just coffee. Thanks.

The WAITRESS leaves.

WINSTON
A few tips: Dress conservative. A little classy. Don't give anything away. And always, always bring pink flowers. Don't forget flowers. Then get clues. If possible, handwriting. And look for hints, like pink stationary and red ink. Clues about your son, photographs, anything. Find the typewriter! If you can, (he leans in) bring the typewriter back. Then I can forensically match the type on the letter.

DON looks at him blankly.

DON
Typewriter...Winston, you're insane. (pause) Even if you could possibly rope me into this nonsense, which you can't, I'm not a detective. I'm not a private eye from one of your detective novels. (pause) And did you ever even think about how that kind of...of "investigation" might affect me, emotionally? Going into the vortex of my past and the...present lives of these women? Forget it. No fucking way, Winston.

WINSTON
(offended)
After all the work I've done?

DON
You do it, then. You take "the trip". I'll pay for it.

WINSTON
Me? Impossible. I have three jobs and five kids. You're the one who's insane, man. Anyway, it's your life, Don! This is your life! You've gotta do this. It's your soul's destiny. (pause) I've prepared the strategy. Only you can solve this mystery.

DON
And why is that, Winston?

WINSTON
Because...because you understand women.

DON
(after a pause)
No, I don't.

The WAITRESS arrives with DON's coffee, sets it down and leaves.

DON (cont'd)
Let me ask you something. So, what if I were to take this ridiculous trip, and say this kid really exists and he shows up while I'm gone? Then what?

WINSTON
Don't worry about that. I'm gonna monitor your house everyday.

DON
Yeah. Then what? What if he shows up?

WINSTON
I'll approach him. (pause) Don't worry, I got that covered.

DON
Great. You'll apprehend him...

WINSTON
(looking at his watch)
I gotta punch back in in, like, seven minutes. Tomorrow morning on my way to the plant, I'll drop you at the airport. No problem. I got you an early flight.

WINSTON puts money on the table and stands up but Don hands it back to him. Winston pockets it, moving away from the table.

DON
I'm not gonna do this, Winston. No way.

WINSTON is already approaching the door. DON looks out the window, off into the parking lot.

DON (cont'd)
(quietly after a pause)
Beautiful Michelle Pepe...

FADE TO LONG

BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT DEPARTURE GATE - MORNING

DON, wearing dark glasses, sits in a row of identical naugahyde chairs attached to one another near an airport departure gate. He's wearing a dark tailored suit, with a dark shirt, collar unbottoned. There is a small carry-on bag on the seat next to him. Despite the dark glasses, DON appears uncharacteristically vulnerable. He glances to his right.

Two seats away is a perky young STEWARDESS in uniform. Her crossed feet are resting on her generic blue roll-on luggage. She is engaged in a newspaper crossword puzzle.

A short time passes, then the young STEWARDESS turns to DON.

STEWARDESS
Excuse me, sir? Can I ask you a question?

DON
Uh, sure.

STEWARDESS
What's a four letter word for "sexual passion"? It's not love, though.

DON
No, it's not. It's "lust".

STEWARDESS
(delighted)
Oh, of course. It's lust! (pause)
I feel so stupid...

The STEWARDESS happily returns to her crossword puzzle. DON looks around blankly, somehow appearing even more unsure of himself than before.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

DON is in a window seat looking at the clouds outside, an unoccupied seat next to him.

Both plastic tray tables are folded down, and strewn across them are papers and maps--the dossiers and itineraries WINSTON has meticulously prepared. Ignoring them, DON continues to gaze out the window next to him.

FADE TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - DAY

DON, once again with sunglasses, sits facing in on a blue plastic seat of an airport shuttle bus. Through the window behind him endless rental car parking lots are visible.

DON observes two teenage girls seated directly across from him. They are laughing and chattering, starting out on some adventures. DON is invisible to them.

He looks to his right at the shuttle's only other passenger, seated alone in the back of the small bus. The traveler is a YOUNG MAN, about nineteen, wearing dark, well-tailored clothes, and like DON, sunglasses. The YOUNG MAN gazes absently out the window.

The bus stops and its doors open.

DRIVER'S VOICE
(offscreen)
Rental car pickup.

The teenage girls excitedly bound out of the shuttle. DON collects his bag, waiting for the YOUNG MAN to get off first, then steps out after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHUTTLE BUS - DAY

DON stands outside the shuttle for a moment, watching the YOUNG MAN walk off to collect his rental car from a lot.

DON then turns and walks in the opposite direction, toward a row of identical cars in the lot of a competing rental company.

FADE TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. WHITE RENTAL CAR - DAY

DON, wearing his dark glasses, drives a generic white car through a landscape of fast food restaurants and gas stations.

As he drives, he consults a map from WINSTON's prepared materials. Other papers are spread across the seat next to DON.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. WHITE CAR - AFTERNOON

DON sits behind the wheel, the car now parked on a middle-class residential street. The sun is setting and DON no longer wears sunglasses. He looks straight ahead, almost motionless. On the seat next to him, lying across WINSTON'S papers and instructions is a bouquet of deep red roses.

FADE TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAURA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Holding the roses, DON stands on the porch of a pastel ranch house. He is softly lit by a lamp over the door. A box-like economy car, bright yellow, is parked in the drive.

DON looks at the illuminated doorbell button, then pushes it. Through the door he can hear the oddly synthetic "bell" chiming inside. A moment later, the door opens. A teenage girl (LOLITA) looks out at DON. She's wearing a short, pink, terry cloth bathrobe and fuzzy white boots, her long hair tied and sprouting upward on her head.

LOLITA
(she's very friendly)
Hi! Who are you?

She glances at the roses DON is holding.

DON
My name's Don. Don Johnston.

LOLITA
Really? Don Johnson?

DON
No. Johnston. With a "T". (pause)
Is this...does Laura Daniels, who
was formerly Laura Miller, live
here?

LOLITA
Yeah! That's my mom.

DON
Oh. Well, I'm an old friend of
Laura's. I haven't seen her in
over...

LOLITA
Come in!

She opens the door wider and DON enters, forced to almost brush against her as he steps past.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

LOLITA closes the door behind them and bounds into the living room.

LOLITA
My mom'll be home from work soon. Just make yourself at home. My name's Lola. Sometimes people call me Lo. My really real name is Lolita, though. (she laughs)

DON, incredulous, follows her into the room. LOLITA motions generously toward a chair.

LOLITA (cont'd)
Please, be comfortable.

DON
Thanks.

DON sits down, still holding the roses. LOLITA, remains standing, having way too much energy to sit.

DON (cont'd)
Do you have any sisters or brothers?

LOLITA
Why? Do you think I need some? (pause) I like being the only one. The wild child.

She laughs, then a telephone ring emanates synthetically from another room.

LOLITA (cont'd)
Oh! My phone!

She bounces down a small hallway and makes a sharp left through the doorway, disappearing from view.

DON looks around at the generically feminine decor, perhaps for clues, while LOLITA can be heard faintly giggling and chattering on the phone in another room.

DON's eyes rest on a framed photograph of a man, presumably LAURA's husband, resting on the mantel.

He is handsome, and appears to be a race car driver. DON's gaze then drifts across other objects in the room: they offer no clues to the mysterious letter, but instead to a life DON might have lived if different paths had been taken. He begins to feel uncomfortable.

A customized cellphone on a table near the hallway begins to ring. DON turns his head and sees LOLITA, still giggling into a portable phone, emerge into the hallway. She's now wearing ONLY the fuzzy boots.

DON quickly looks away, as the naked LOLITA briefly enters the living room, retrieving her cellphone from the table near the hallway.

LOLITA (cont'd)
(into portable phone)
Hold on a sec, someone's calling my cell.

She picks up the second phone and answers it.

LOLITA (cont'd)
Hello?

DON glances back to see LOLITA, now holding both phones, coquettishly looking over her shoulder at him as she drifts back down the hall, then once again disappears into her room.

Now even more uncomfortable, DON gets up and, absently carrying the roses, quickly moves to the door. He opens it quietly, and slips outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAURA'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Just as DON steps off the small porch, a red, Chevy, muscle car pulls into the driveway.

DON stops dead, offguard, with roses in hand, and watches a woman get out of the car and approach him.

He recognizes LAURA. LAURA MILLER. She's an older version of her daughter.

LAURA
Hello? Can I help you?

She steps up to DON, looking directly at him. There's a brief moment of silence.

LAURA (cont'd)
Donny? Is that really you?

DON
Hey, Laura.

LAURA, too, is momentarily taken aback, but she quickly recovers.

She sets down the bag she's carrying and embraces DON. He reciprocates, hesitantly. Eventually she steps back and looks into DON's eyes.

LAURA
What are you doing here?

Before he can formulate an answer, LAURA has taken his hand, picked up her bag, and is pulling him back toward the house.

FADE TO BLACK:

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

DON sits at a table eating dinner with LAURA and LOLITA (who's now dressed in low-cut jeans and a provocative top). LAURA, wearing a low cut, summery dress, continues talking as she refills DON's glass with white wine.

LAURA
Then Larry exploded into a ball of flames on the track...(pause) Well, that happened. (pause) And now it's just me and Lo.

She sighs, then drinks more wine.

LOLITA
It was even on TV.

DON
(after a pause)
I'm sorry.

LAURA takes another drink, and looks over at Lolita.

LAURA (TO LOLITA)
Your head looks like a pineapple.

She laughs and touches the top of Lolita's hair.

LAURA (cont'd)
Doesn't it, Don?

LOLITA
Mom!

DON
Well, yeah. It does look like a pineapple. (after a pause)
So what...where do you work?

LOLITA
Mom has her own business!

LAURA
I do! Professional closet organizer!

DON looks blankly at her.

LAURA (cont'd)
I organize people's closets for them. Do their drawers. I label everything, put it all in order. Even color coordinate!

LOLITA
Yeah, and they pay her for that!

LOLITA pours herself a little more wine.

LOLITA (cont'd)
Lolita! You've had enough. I said just a taste.

LOLITA shrugs and takes a gulp from her glass. She then mischievously pours more from the bottle into DON's glass.

DON
Lolita. (pause) Interesting choice of name, Laura.

LAURA looks at DON, then at LOLITA.

LOLITA
What. (she starts to giggle)

LAURA
Yeah, well, I don't know what on earth I was thinking at the time...

Another pause, as they all sip more white wine.

LAURA (cont'd)
And what's your line of business, Don? I heard you made it big a while ago.

DON
Computers.

LAURA
Really? High-tech stuff...

DON
(after a pause)
So, I noticed you guys are having a yard sale.

LOLITA
Yeah! On Saturdays.

DON
Any...any typewriters?

LAURA
What?

LOLITA
(laughing)
That's so twentieth-century!

LAURA
It is! No, no typewriters. We have an old computer, though. Do you want to use it?

DON
No. Thanks, though.

LAURA then pours more wine into DON's glass, then into her own.

LAURA
Why do you need a typewriter. Donny?

DON
It's for a friend of mine.

They drink more wine.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. LAURA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

In low light, LAURA and DON are on the sofa in the living room, drinking brandy.

DON sets his glass down and looks at his watch, while LAURA puts her head on his shoulder, her hand resting on his chest.

DON
Laura, I think I should get goin'. I have to get up really early.

LAURA
(slightly slurred)
No! Don, you don't have to go yet. (pause, then softly) Please. I get so lonely. (pause) Can't you just stay here tonight? (then, pouting and playing with the buttons on his shirt) I'll probably never see you again, so I don't know how it would hurt anything...

She flips her hand inside DON's shirt and nudges his ear with her lips as she gazes blearily into the darkened room.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. LAURA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Morning light comes through pale curtains. DON and LAURA are asleep in LAURA's flowered sheets.

DON opens his eyes and props himself up, glancing at his surroundings in a state of sleepy confusion. He looks over and sees LAURA asleep next to him. She stirs and turns over toward him, opening her eyes.

LAURA, too, is very surprised to see DON in her bed.

LAURA
Don? (pause) What are you doing here?

She laughs softly, her arms encircling him.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE UP ON:

EXT. LAURA'S HOUSE - MORNING

DON, dressed but a little disheveled, steps off the porch and begins to cross the lawn toward his white rental car parked in the street.

Laura, now wearing the short, pink, terry cloth bathrobe catches up to him and gives him a brief kiss.

Don turns away, approaches his car and gets in.

He starts the car and begins to pull away, pausing to wave to LAURA, who stands in the doorway.

LAURA
Sure was good to see you!

DON
You too, Laura.

He sees LOLITA squeezes in behind her mother, wearing a tiny bra, and even tinier underwear. She waves at him over her mother's shoulder.

LOLITA
Bye Don! Come back sometime!

DON waves to her, as her mother turns toward her.

LAURA
(pushing her daughter back inside)
Lo! Put some clothes on!

DON opens the car door and, after waving once more, slides in and starts the car. As he pulls away, he glances back to see LAURA waving from the doorway, and LOLITA reappearing in a window, also waving.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT./EXT. WHITE CAR - DAY

Sleepily, DON drives the white rental onto an interstate highway. He swigs coffee from a paper container while glancing at one of WINSTON's maps, still managing to keep one hand on the steering wheel.

From among the array of WINSTON's papers and instructions on the seat next to him, DON finds a home-burned CD. On it is hand-written "From WINSTON--Good Luck!". DON slides the disk into the car's stereo, then puts on his dark glasses. The car fills with moody Ethiopian funk/jazz as it floats down the highway.

As DON moves toward the next step in his "investigation", the white rental car passes long sections of farmland, then moves through more populated, more generic commercial landscapes, then industrial areas, more farmland, another commercial area...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. WHITE CAR - AFTERNOON

DON pulls another map from WINSTON's folder. He looks at it while driving, then places it on top of the folder on the seat next to him. He puts on his dark glasses, and takes a ramp onto a highway...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. SUBURBAN LANDSCAPE - EARLY MORNING

The white car is parked in a new suburban neighborhood, possibly a "gated community". The moderate sized homes are on similar lots, similarly landscaped, each only slightly different cosmetically.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE CAR - EARLY EVENING

DON looks at the house he is parked nearest to. Then, at the other houses on the street. He takes a deep breath.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. DORA'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Again holding a bouquet of roses, DON takes another deep breath, then, using the brass door knocker, knocks on the door.

A moment later, a woman opens it (DORA). She's dressed in a bland but upscale suburban style, almost as though for an office meeting. She is, however, beautiful and, except for her startled expression, could be an advertisement for something.

DORA
Can I help you?

DON
Dora?

DORA
Yes? (pause, not recognizing him).
Can I help you?

DON
It's me. Don. Remember me?

DORA is stunned and takes a small step backwards. There is an awkward pause.

DON (cont'd)
I...bought you these flowers.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

INT. DORA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Dora, now holding the flowers, closes the front door behind them as Don stands in the foyer. Dora moves around in front of him and moves through the foyer, Don following.

DORA
This is the house. Nice little greeting room there...
(she motions to the right)
And the formal dining room area there...
(she motions to the left)

The two stop in the doorway opening onto the large living/entertainment room, with the large open kitchen area off to the left.

DORA (cont'd)
This is our flagship model home. Other variations are available.
(pause)
Oh, goodness. I'm selling you the place.
(she laughs lightly)
I'm sorry. I'll put these flowers in a vase.

She moves off towards the kitchen, while Don surveys the large, sparsely decorated living room.

DORA (cont'd)
(off screen)
Would you like some coffee?

DON
Uh, sure. Thanks.

His gaze sweeps the living room, crossing into the kitchen where Dora can be seen placing the pink roses into a vase.

INT. DORA'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

DORA and DON sit in DORA's living room. It's "perfect"; like a photograph in a catalogue. They are having coffee.

DORA's startled expression now appears to be a permanent facial feature, as she looks furtively across a coffee table at DON. She holds her hands in her lap, just on the verge of wringing them.

DORA
So, what brings you out here?

DON
Well, I was sort of in the area, in a way, so I thought I'd look you up.

DORA
I see. How, how did you track me down, exactly?

DON
(after a quick sip of coffee)
Uh, on the computer. They can do anything.

There's an awkward silence. More and more, DORA's nervousness seems to be a personality trait.

DON (cont'd)
Nice place you got here.

DORA
(lighting up a little)
Oh, Thank you. It's a nice example. I'm sure you guessed that my husband and I are in real estate.

DON
Yeah.

DORA
We sell landscaped lots and pre-constructed designer homes. (pause She hands him a business card). Or do you already have this information from your computer?

DON
No. It's...fascinating... (pause) Your card is pink!

DORA
Yes. (she averts her eyes) Ron, my husband, thought it would be cute if mine were pink and his blue.

There is pause during which Don notices pearls.

DON
I like your pearls. Did...did I give those to you?

DORA
I don't think so.

Another pause.

DON
Well...It's a nice part of the country here.

Another pause.

DORA
It's very strange, your showing up here like this.

DON
Uh, yeah. It is kinda strange.

Outside, a car engine is heard. It cuts off and a car door, followed by an electric garage door, can be heard.

DORA
It's my husband.

A moment later, DORA's husband (RON) bounds into the room. He's tan and healthy, energetic. His clothes are of a similar style to those of his wife, but slightly more casual.

RON
(not yet aware of DON)
Hey, where's my perfect little...

DON stands up, as does DORA.

RON (cont'd)
(smiling)
Whoa! What have we here?

DON steps over to him, stretching out his hand.

DON
My name's Don. Johnston. I'm a really old friend of Dora's.

RON
(firmly shaking DON's hand)
Oh, you don't look really old! (pause) Just kinda old. (he laughs) I'm Ron.

RON then steps over to embrace his wife. He kisses her on the cheek, then turns back to DON, studying him for a moment, his arms still encircling his doll-like wife.

RON (cont'd)
Don Johnston? Old flame of yours, right honey?

DORA
(nervously)
Don just dropped in, completely unexpectedly.

RON
Well, nice to meet you, Don. Ron and Don. (he laughs again). So, is Don gonna stay for dinner, I hope?

DON looks over at DORA.

DON
(uncomfortable)
Oh, no. Thanks, really, but...I couldn't.

RON
Sure you could! (pause) Right, honey?

DON looks at RON's overly pleasant expression, right next to DORA's odd, startled one.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. DORA'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

The three sit in the dining area of the pre-designed and pre-decorated home. The dinner in front of them also has a prefab appearance.

RON is in a jovial mood, while both DORA and DON seem a little ill at ease.

RON
Computers, huh. That must be a lucrative field.

DON
Yeah, I've done pretty well.

RON
Well, the real estate biz has been good for us, right hon?

DORA nods.

DORA
First I had this idea of going into bottled water. I think in the near future water will be worth more than oil, or gold.

RON
Yeah. If you're dying of thirst, you can't take a swig of oil, right? Or gold, for that matter.

DON
Well, that's certainly true.

RON
But for right now, we decided real estate and quality prefab homes is the way to go. It has been quite lucrative.

There's a pause, as they eat some unreal-looking food. Ron then notices the pink rose in the vase at the end of the table.

RON (cont'd)
Hey, those are nice flowers, honey!

Don and Dora exchange glances. Then Ron straightens up, suddenly energized.

RON (cont'd)
Hey! I wanna show you something, Don!

He gets up from the table and briefly disappears from the room.

When he returns, he is holding a framed black and white photograph. It depicts a young, wild-looking hippy girl in her late teens, flowers in her flowing hair, looking mischievously at the camera.

RON proudly displays the photo to DON, while DORA registers a hint of embarrassment.

RON (cont'd)
Isn't this the coolest photo?

DON
(nodding)
Wow. Yeah.

RON
That is crazy, right? My straight little Dora.

He bends over and embraces her.

RON (cont'd)
My adorable little Dora--a young hippie chick!

DORA
(uncomfortable)
That's great, Ron. Now could you please put it back.

RON
Sure, baby. Probably brings back a memory or two, eh Don?

RON leaves the room with the photo. DON looks at DORA.

DON
(quietly)
I think I took that photo, didn't I?

She doesn't have time to answer before RON returns and takes his seat at the table.

RON
Ah, it's strange how people's lives change, isn't it?

Another pause as they eat a little more.

DON
So, uh, any...any kids?

RON looks briefly at DORA, who looks down at her plate.

RON
Well, that's kind of a touchy subject. (pause) See, I really wanted to have kids with Dora. I mean, kids of our own. (He glances at Dora). But she didn't, really. And I respect that.

DORA
I just love my work so much, and, I just...oh, I don't know if I'd have had the time or patience to be a good mother to...to Ron's children.

DON
Yeah, well, kids aren't for everyone.

RON
Well, I'm just happy to be with my Dora. That's enough for me. (pause) How about you, Don? Married?

DON
No. (pause) Still a bachelor.

RON
A bachelor! (pause) But, any kids?

DORA
He said he was still a bachelor, Ron.

RON
Well, hey! Ya never know, baby. One or two coulda got away.

DON glances at DORA.

DON
No, no kids...that I know of.

RON laughs.

RON
How long you in town for, Don?

DON
Oh, I have to leave really early tomorrow morning, unfortunately.

RON
Too bad! Tomorrow night's our bridge night. You play bridge, Don?

DON
Uh, no. No I don't. I'm not really a gambling man.

RON laughs loudly. DON looks over at DORA.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

DON is asleep in a generic motel room, morning light slanting in through the blinds.

The phone rings, and DON's eyes open. He props himself up, looking around and locating himself, then picks up the phone.

DON
(into phone)
Hello? (pause) Winston. You freak. How did you find me here? (pause) The itinerary...(pause) Yeah. I saw Laura Miller (pause) What? Oh. Yes, Winston, Laura-Daniels-formerly-Laura-Miller. (pause) No, it's not her. And then I saw Dora Anderson, and I'm pretty sure it's not her either. (pause) That's true, Winston. Anything is possible, but I really don't think it's either of them. (pause) Yes, I brought them both flowers. (pause) Yeah, pink flowers. (pause) I know, Carmen's next. (pause) Yes, Winston. Carmen Markowski. (pause) She's a lawyer. (pause) Yes she is. (pause) She's a <u>what</u>? (long pause) You know what? I think I'll just head back now. This is just too...ludicrous. (pause, as he holds the phone away from his ear for several seconds) Yeah, yeah...Winston. Winston! Hey, I'll talk to you later. I gotta...get outta here.

DON hangs up the phone and sits up in bed, remaining there motionless.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Don stands outside the door looking at the landscape.

FADE UP ON:

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

DON is on an airplane asleep. Clouds float by outside the small window next to his head.

He has a brief dream. Images from the past few days recur, distorted, their sequence rearranged:

The young STEWARDESS in the airport, LAURA's face in bed, the PINK ENVELOPE, WINSTON at his computer, DORA's eyes, RON's grin, LOLITA naked in the hallway, Photo of a young DORA, the PINK ENVELOPE again...

DON continues sleeping.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. AIRPORT ROAD/CAR RENTAL LOT - AFTERNOON

Driving a generic blue car, DON pulls away from a rental car area, airport cargo hangars visible in the background.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. BLUE CAR - DAY

DON's blue rental car turns into a drive in a wooded area. It slows as DON reads a rustic but professional-looking sign over the mailbox: Dr. Carmen Markowski.

The driveway winds briefly through a garden-like landscape--flowering bushes and trees, a small pond...DON parks in a small lot adjacent to a quaint cottage--a guest house now reidentified by a wooden sign: Office. Beyond it a larger house is barely visible through more trees and flowering bushes.

DON gets out, carrying a bouquet of red roses. Several other cars are parked. Looking around, he approaches the office.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

DON, holding the flowers half behind him, stands over a young woman (CARMEN'S ASSISTANT), who sits behind a small desk supporting a phone and an opened laptop.

The interior is very warm and woodsy. The ASSISTANT's long hair is pulled into a ponytail and she wears glasses. Her short white lab coat almost covers an only slightly longer mini-skirt.

ASSISTANT
(on phone)
Yes, she does speak with iguanas. (pause) Okay. (pause) That's right, call back on Monday and we'll happily shedule you and Iggy. (pause) Sure. Thank you.

She hangs up the phone, then looks up at Don.

ASSISTANT (cont'd)
(to Don)
Sorry, Mr. Johnston. Dr. Markowski only takes appointments, and she's in session right now.
(she looks down at either side of Don)
Is your animal friend with you?

DON
Oh. Uh, no, I don't have an animal friend. I'm an old friend of Car...of Dr. Markowski.

ASSISTANT
This session's ending soon, but Carmen has a really tight schedule. She might have a minute, if you'd like to sit down.

She gestures toward a pleated white couch. Don sits down, absently placing the bouquet on the couch beside him. He looks at details around the room, then watches the ASSISTANT, now absorbed in her laptop.

After a short period, the door to the inner office opens behind the ASSISTANT, who stands up. DON also stands. Through the doorway, he can see a woman and her dog facing into the other room. Beyond them is CARMEN MARKOWSKI. She is striking, fine-featured, with long dark hair and light eyes. DON hears her voice as she bends a little toward the dog.

CARMEN
(to dog)
Oh, of course I won't forget about you, Cleo! (pause) Yes, I promise.

The dog's tail wags, then both dog and owner turn and walk through the waiting room.

DOG OWNER
(to ASSISTANT)
Bye now.

ASSISTANT
See you next week, Mrs. Dorston.
See you then, Cleo!

As they exit, CARMEN stops in the doorway of her office. Her eyes meet DON's. Her face seems to drop for a moment. The ASSISTANT can't help but look back and forth between them before CARMEN speaks.

CARMEN
Don?

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE UP ON:

INT. CARMEN'S OFFICE - DAY

With no evidence of chairs in the room, DON and CARMEN sit on large Persian pillows on the floor facing each other. CARMEN's face is difficult to read, but she doesn't seem particularly ecstatic to see DON. She glances at her watch.

DON
So, you're an animal psychic?

CARMEN
No, I'm a communicator.

DON
And now you're a doctor? (pause)
When we were together you were so passionate about becoming a lawyer.
I mean, you were really passionate.

CARMEN
Yeah, well, passion is a funny thing.

They make eye contact, then CARMEN looks away.

CARMEN (cont'd)
I have a doctorate in animal behavior, but that was sort of after the fact. (she sighs) Oh, it's an odd story.

DON remains quiet, waiting for her to continue.

CARMEN (cont'd)
I was a very successful lawyer. I had no life, though, outside of my work. Except for my dog, Winston.

DON
(surprised)
Your dog's named Winston?

CARMEN
Yes. (pause) But then Winston died. Suddenly.

DON
I'm sorry.

CARMEN
It was years ago. But my new ability was a gift. A gift from Winston.

Temporarily distracted, CARMEN speaks, seemingly to some invisible presence.

CARMEN (cont'd)
Oh, alright. You can come back in now.

Reaching behind her, she cranks open a low window and a gray cat jumps in. It sits beside her and looks disapprovingly at DON.

CARMEN (cont'd)
(continuing to DON)
Anyway, after Winston died, I got this gift.

DON
To...to read animal's minds?

CARMEN
No. I told you. I communicate. Soon after Winston died, I realized I could hear animals speak to me. I certainly wasn't aware of it before. (pause) And I don't read their minds, but when they wish to communicate, I can hear them. They communicate a thought, and I hear it. That's all. (pause) Just like you and I, talking. But we can't read each other's minds.

DON looks over at her cat, who is staring at him.

DON
So, is he saying anything?

CARMEN looks at the cat.

CARMEN
Is that what you think of Don, Smokey?

DON
What?

CARMEN
He said you...he thinks you're a loser.

CARMEN smiles. DON looks at the cat, who looks away, then gets up and goes back out through the still open window.

DON
So, in your sessions, what happens? The animals tell you what they want from their masters, or what?

CARMEN
Well, it varies widely. As you might expect, they mostly talk very particularly about their food. (pause) Anyway, animals can tell us what they want, but that doesn't always mean that that's what's best for them.

They look at each other. A moment later, there's a knock on the door, then it opens a little. The ASSISTANT sticks her head inside.

ASSISTANT
Carmen, Mr. Renaldo and Skippy are here for your next session.

CARMEN
OK. Just give me a minute.

The door closes.

CARMEN (cont'd)
Well...

She gets to her feet. Reluctantly, DON stands up.

DON
Could you maybe walk me to my car? I might not be able to...remember which one's mine.

CARMEN looks at him blankly.

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE PARKING AREA - AFTERNOON

DON and CARMEN stand by the driver's side door of the blue rental. DON looks at CARMEN.

DON
What about later? Maybe we could get a drink.

CARMEN
I don't drink.

DON
Maybe something to eat?

CARMEN
I don't...eat.

DON
You don't? (pause) Take a walk? I know you walk.

CARMEN
I don't...feel like it.

DON
(after a pause)
Do you have a typewriter?

CARMEN looks at him oddly.

CARMEN
A typewriter?

DON
Are you married?

CARMEN
I think you should go.

She opens the car door for him.

DON
(still standing next to her)
Aw, Carmen, can't you just answer me?

CARMEN
No.

DON
You won't answer?

CARMEN
No, I'm not married. (pause) I was, though.

DON
Any kids?

CARMEN
I have a daughter. (pause) Lianna. She's sixteen. She's in Sweden.

DON
Sweden...

CARMEN
Am I supposed to ask about you? Seems like I've told you my life story. So, how about you, Don?

DON
Me? Oh. No, I'm not married.

CARMEN
Of course you aren't.

DON
And I don't have any kids.

He looks directly into her eyes.

Again, CARMEN looks at him strangely.

CARMEN
How would I know?

DON
(after a pause)
Yeah...

Just then CARMEN's ASSISTANT appears at her side.

ASSISTANT
Sorry, Carmen, but Mr. Renaldo and Skippy have been waiting in the session room.

CARMEN
I'll be right there. Sorry.

The ASSISTANT goes back inside.

CARMEN (cont'd)
My time is really up, Don.

DON slides into the car and closes the door.

DON
(through the car's open window)
Yeah, sorry to just drop it like this.

CARMEN
Well, it certainly was...strange to see you.

DON
Yeah. You too.

She makes eye contact, then turns and goes back inside.

DON watches her for a moment, then starts the car's engine. Just as he's about to back up, CARMEN's ASSISTANT reappears next to the car. She's holding the bouquet of flowers out to him.

ASSISTANT
You forgot your flowers, Mr. Johnston.

DON looks up at her, then at the flowers in her hand.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. MOTEL - EARLY MORNING

Again DON is in bed in a generic beige motel room. Strong morning light leaks in around the edges of the drawn curtains.

DON is awake, though. Partially propped up in bed and staring blankly into space. After a moment, the phone on the nightstand rings. Slowly DON reaches over and answers it.

DON
(into phone)
Hello? (pause) Oh, man, I was afraid it would be you. (pause) Winston, I have no idea why I'm doing this. I'm getting nowhere. (pause) Yeah, I saw her. (pause) Yeah, I saw her too. Yesterday. (pause) No, no clues at all. (pause) And listen, couldn't you have rented me one decent car? A Porsche, or something I might really drive? (pause) Don't give anything away... What would that be giving away exactly? (a longer pause) Yeah, well I think I've had enough of this. I think I should head back today. (pause) Yeah, but I don't think I want to see her. (pause) Winston? Winston! I'll just talk to you later, OK? (pause) Winston. (pause) Goodbye, Winston.

DON hangs up the phone, returning to his previous state.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT./EXT. BLUE CAR - DAY

Wearing dark glasses, DON is behind the wheel of the blue rental, maps and other papers on the seat beside him.

The car stops at a crossroads in a rural area. There are no other cars, no real sign of anyone.

DON studies the map in frustration. He looks in both directions: a landscape of trees, hills and fields, an abandoned barn...

Slowly the car makes a left turn and continues.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

The car is parked on the roadside bordering a field, an opened map lying on its hood. The driver's side door is open, and an electronic "ringing" can be heard, faintly mixing with the sounds of surrounding birds.

DON, a short distance into the field, is apparently picking wildflowers.

He jolts to attention when he hears the sound of an approaching vehicle, then moves quickly back to the road, a bouquet of wildflowers in hand.

Some distance away, he sees a well-used pickup truck coming in his direction. He steps further out into the road.

The truck slows. Inside are two scruffy young men, unshaven and with long greasy hair. The driver has a toothpick in his mouth, the other a cigarette.

DON waves, speaking before the truck has some to a complete stop.

DON
(loudly)
Excuse me! Do you know...

The sputtering truck stops next to him.

DON (cont'd)
Do you guys know where Atwood Road is? I'm lost.

The DRIVER stares down at him through cracked mirrored sunglasses, toothpick in the corner of his mouth, then gestures with his thumb in the direction behind him. Immediately the truck pulls away, loudly, leaving DON standing in the road holding the flowers.

DON (cont'd)
(quietly)
Thanks.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. RURAL AREA - DAY

The blue car makes a turn onto a road. Small signs on a wooden pole surrounded by weeds and vines marks ATWOOD ROAD and, in the direction the car is now headed, DEAD END.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE CAR - DAY

DON looks through the windshield at the uphill, winding road ahead. Again the landscape consists of uninhabited woods and fields.

Eventually he sees an old farmhouse, with several weathered barns and outbuildings at the end of a long dirt driveway.

As the car gradually approaches the house, a scruffy dog stands up and walks toward the suspicious vehicle. A chopped motorcycle is parked near the house, and DON sees several more, along with old engine parts, near a barn-like garage some distance from the house. There is also a pick-up truck and an old El Camino.

DON pulls up and turns off the car's engine.

CUT TO:

EXT. PENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

The dog walks up to the car as DON, with flowers, gets out. The dog doesn't bark, but when DON reaches down to pat it, it growls.

DON
(to dog)
It's OK, fella.

A man (DAN) appears, stepping out from a dilapidated garage, a wrench in hand. He looks over at Don.

DAN
Can I help you?

DON
Is Penny around?

DAN
Who's asking?

DON
I'm Don Johnston. I'm an old friend of Penny's.

A second man (WILL) emerges from the garage and stands next to Dan. He also looks at Don.

DAN
She's in the house. The door's around back there.

DON
Thanks.

Don turns and moves towards the house, the two men temporarily watching him.

He looks around as he approaches the house. He sees a battered basketball backboard, then a motorcycle with a pink tank. Along the side of the house he sees pink flowers identical to those in his hand.

He steps onto the weathered porch.

He looks around before knocking on a rickety screen door.

A moment later, a woman (PENNY) swirls into view on the other side of the screen door.

She is striking, with long, thick dark hair and eyes that look possibly Atlantic or Native American. She is wearing a faded blue plaid bathrobe, tied low, and scuffed workboots, untied. A cigarette is in one hand, while the other drifts up to her forehead, shading her eyes from incoming sunlight.

PENNY
(squinting)
Hello?

DON
Penny?

PENNY
Yeah?

DON
It's me. Don.

PENNY pulls open the screen door and leans out, staring at him.

PENNY
Donny...

The door opens more and she steps out, her eyes on DON, intensely. In the sunlight her face is still striking, though more visibly worn. She sees the flowers in DON's hand, dozens like them growing in the backyard and among the weeds around the house.

PENNY (cont'd)
So, what the fuck do you want, Donny?

DON
(self-consciously holding the flowers lower and to his side)
Oh, I just thought I'd look you up.

PENNY takes a drag on her cigarette and exhales.

PENNY
Well, I don't remember any happy ending between us, Don. No reconciliation, nothing.

DON
But you left me, Penny. Remember?

PENNY
Yeah. Very clearly. (pause) Now what is it you wanted?

WILL's voice is heard from the direction of the barn.

WILL'S VOICE
Everything alright out there, Pen?

DON looks over and sees WILL outside the barn. Then DAN emerges behind WILL.

PENNY
(loudly to WILL)
Not sure yet.

WILL'S VOICE
Aw, goddamn it...

He goes back inside the barn briefly, then reappears and begins walking toward them, followed by DAN.

PENNY takes another drag, and exhales.

PENNY
So what was it you wanted again?

DON is watching the men approaching, but turns back to PENNY.

DON
Penny, do you...do you have a son?

PENNY erupts, flicking away her cigarette and lunging toward him.

PENNY
(furious)
Fuck you, Donny!

She shoves him backwards off the porch, then bursts into tears, whirls around and disappears inside the house. The screen door springs closed with a loud "crack".

DON, off balance, suddenly has WILL and DAN directly in front of him.

WILL'S VOICE
(loudly)
What the fuck! Danny, grab that fucker.

He turns and runs inside after PENNY while DAN forcefully takes DON by the lapels of his jacket and slams him up against a pole on the porch. DON still clutches the flowers in his hand.

DAN
Shut up!

DON
(quietly)
I didn't say anything.

DON looks away. His eyes drift over to the weeds nearby, where several broken or rusted items have been discarded over the years. Among them, he sees a battered pink typewriter. Before he can estimate how recently it might have been discarded, the screen door makes another loud crack as WILL rushes back outside. He puts a hand on DAN's shoulder and DAN moves aside, WILL then stepping into his place directly in front of DON.

WILL
(threateningly, not far from DON's face)
Just what the hell is your fuckin' problem?

DON
I was just leaving.

WILL
No. What do you think you're doin', upsetting Penny like that, huh?

DON
I...I just needed to ask her...

WILL
(shouting)
I know what you fuckin' asked her! (then, quietly) Now, I just don't think that was too sensitive on your part comin' out here to hurt Penny's feelings, to get back at her or whatever. But playin' on the fact she can't never have children no more...

DON flinches as WILL pulls back a closed fist.

WILL (cont'd)
...that's just rude!

DON sees WILL release his fist. It smashes into DON's face.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. BLUE CAR - DAWN

DON, motionless, eyes closed, is lying in the back seat of the blue rental, his now-wilted assortment of wildflowers broken and strewn across his chest. His suit jacket is ripped, a thin line of dried blood is visible under his nose, and there's a gash over his left eye, which is swollen and bruised.

Slowly, the other eye opens. Dawn light pours in through the car windows. With difficulty, DON pulls himself up, groaning, and looks warily through the windows.

Fallow cornfields, bordered by woods, surround him as far as he can see.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAWN

The car sits like a metal alien island in the middle of the rutted cornfield. A rear door opens, and DON tumbles out.

He slowly stands, wincing, then looks around him. Stuff and in pain, he stretches his limbs, then slowly moves around the car, finally opening the drivers side door and sliding inside.

After several attempts, the engine coughs, then starts. DON engages the transmission, and the car limps across the furrowed cornfield.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. BLUE CAR - DAY

While driving, DON checks himself in the rearview mirror. He wipes the dried blood from his nose, and checks the gash over his bruised and swollen eye.

He fishes his dark glasses from a jacket pocket, puts them on, then slides WINSTON's CD into the car stereo.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLUE CAR - DAY

The blue car moves from a rural road onto a larger highway, heading north...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. FLORIST SHOP - AFTERNOON

Wearing his sunglasses, DON leans against the counter in a small roadside florist shop.

He watches a girl (SUN: early 20's, long hair, freshly beautiful) arrange an elegant bouquet of flowers, consisting mostly of roses.

The girl makes only fleeting eye contact with DON, as she carefully prepares the most beautiful and delicate arrangement yet.

DON
Wow, you're really good at this. That's beautiful.

SUN
Thanks.

She notices DON's eye when he briefly lifts the glasses to check the swelling with his finger.

SUN (cont'd)
Are you OK?

DON
Yeah. Just a minor...misunderstanding.

The girl finishes the bouquet. DON watches as she ties it with a pink ribbon. She then disappears briefly into a back room, soon reemerging with a square bandage.

SUN
Can I look at that?

DON takes off his glasses.

SUN (cont'd)
Ew. Did you wash that?

DON
Sort of.

Carefully reaching over the counter, she applies the bandage to DON's injured eye.

SUN
There.

DON
Thanks. (pause, replacing his glasses). What's your name?

SUN
Sun. Sun Green.

DON
Sun Green. (pause) Perfect.

SUN
What's yours?

DON puts down some money on the counter.

DON
Don. Don Johnston.

SUN
Really? Don Johnson?

DON
Johnston. With a "T".

SUN smiles and hands him the bouquet.

DON (cont'd)
Thank you, Sun Green.

SUN
You're welcome.

DON backs away from the counter toward the exit.

DON
If I stay on this road I'll find the Riverview cemetery, right?

SUN
Yeah. Straight down the hill. You'll see the entrance on the right.

DON
OK.

A little bell rings softly as he closes the door behind him.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Holding the bouquet, DON stands in a cemetery in front of a pale marble gravestone marked CELIA VALERIO.

Kneeling, he carefully places the flowers on the ground in front of the gravestone. He then kisses his fingers and stretches his arm out to touch its marble surface.

DON
Beautiful Celia Valerio...

He remains there for a moment, silently.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Once again DON is in an airplane, and again seated next to the window. The window is black, indicating night, but DON still wears the dark glasses concealing his injured, bandaged eye. His head is back against the headrest and he appears to be asleep.

DON has another dream, again including distorted images from his recent experiences:

The dog outside PENNY's house, the photo of DORA as a wild young flower child, CARMEN's face, LOLITA's face, DORA's pink business card, the empty cornfield, the smashed typewriter in the weeds, the pink bathrobe, SUN GREEN preparing flowers, Celia Valerio's gravestone...

DON continues sleeping, lit by a dim overhead reading lamp.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

DON, dark glasses covering his injured eye, his suit jacket torn, emerges from the airport into the night air. He pauses near the curb under a taxi sign, removes the glasses, and touches the bandage on his swollen eye.

Peripherally, he notices a young man who's just emerged from the airport and now appears to be hovering in the shadows near the door.

DON looks over at the young man (THE KID: late teens, tall--about DON's height, disheveled longish hair, torn jacket, two canvas bags--one with a shoulder strap and another smaller backpack).

They make eye contact. Then THE KID looks away. A taxi pulls up in front of DON.

He turns and opens the door, throws his bag inside, then gets in. Closing the door, he again looks over just as THE KID, still standing in half-shadow, averts his eyes.

The taxi pulls away.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. DON'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Early light flickers in through the trees just outside the windows. Still dressed in his travelling suit, DON is asleep on the sofa, his body half-curled into a protective position. His piece of luggage is on the floor, next to his shoes.

The room is very peaceful. The sound of DON's breathing mixes with the more distant sound of birds singing outside.

A phone rings. DON's good eye opens slowly. The phone continues to ring. He reaches out leadenly and answers it.

DON
(into phone)
What. (pause) Yeah, late last night...(pause) Winston, I think the whole thing was a big mistake, and...(pause) No, I didn't solve the mystery, (pause) Oh, man. Look, I'm not in great shape and I need...(pause) This afternoon? Double shifts? Winston, you're nuts. Yeah, OK. I'll meet you there at 2:30.

He hangs up the phone, then returns to his previous position. He lies there quietly, one eye open.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. DON'S FOYER - DAY

Wearing the black tracksuit with white stripes on the sleeves and legs, DON approaches his door, keys in one hand, sunglasses in the other.

He pauses, moving a small pile of accumulated mail out of his path with his foot. As the letters slide to one side of the door, DON notices, among them, a PINK ENVELOPE.

He picks it up. It's smaller than the previous one, and not stamped or even addressed. He opens it and reads a note written in red ink on the inside of a folded piece of pink paper.

DON sighs deeply and slides the pink note back into its pink envelope. Putting it in his pocket, he puts on his dark glasses and goes out, closing the heavy door behind him.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. LUNCHEONETTE - DAY

DON sits across from WINSTON in a booth by the window overlooking the parking lot in front of the restaurant. DON wears dark glasses and his black tracksuit, while WINSTON is in his green factory coveralls.

WINSTON has been listening in rapt attention, taking notes in a small notebook, while DON has recounter the details of his "investigation".

DON
...so that's my report, Sherlock. That's the general outline of what you put me through.

WINSTON
That's it? I mean, after all that? No typewriter even, and you still have no idea who the mother of your son is?

DON
That's right.

WINSTON flips through his notes.

WINSTON
(more to himself, concentrating)
But you saw that one typewriter, and the pink motorcycle, and there's Dona's pink business card, and Laura's pink bathrobe...

DON
I think the whole thing is a farce, a fiasco. (pause) As far as I know, you could have sent that letter.

WINSTON looks across at him, hurt and incredulous. DON takes off his glasses and puts them in his pocket. He gingerly touches his swollen eye.

WINSTON
I'm sorry you got beat up and everything. I feel like it was somehow my fault.

DON
It was. (pause) Kinda weird, too, that Carmen's magic dog was named Winston.

WINSTON
Yeah...(pause) Hey, come on, man. I did a lot of work on this. I thought it was important to you to find out if you have a son and everything. It's your life. I mean, you gotta live your life, right?

DON
I was living my life, Winston.

WINSTON
Yeah, I know, but...I just thought it could help you find the present moment. You know what I mean?

DON
No.

DON reaches into a pocket and produces the NEW PINK ENVELOPE he found in his foyer. He hands it to WINSTON.

WINSTON
(excited)
What's this? It's pink!

DON
It's a note I found when I got back. Red ink on pink paper. It's from Sherry.

WINSTON
What? Sherry? Why didn't you tell me? Can I look at it?

Without waiting for a response, WINSTON pulls the note from inside the unmarked envelope and examines it carefully.

WINSTON (cont'd)
Different size envelope and paper. You know, the handwriting's close, but I'm not sure...(pause, glancing at DON). Sherry still likes you. (pause) You think Sherry sent the letter and made the whole thing up just to fuck with you?

DON
(sighing)
Who knows...

WINSTON quickly checks his watch.

WINSTON
Man, I gotta go. I got just enough time to stop at home and compare the handwriting and still hopefully punch in on time. (then, getting up) You coming?

DON
No. I don't think I care anymore.

WINSTON
(standing)
I'll call you later, then.

DON
Winston, I'll just call you tomorrow, OK? I need a break from all this.

WINSTON
(moving away)
Don't worry, we're still gonna solve the mystery!

WINSTON bolts out of the restaurant, clutching the NEW PINK ENVELOPE.

DON
(to himself)
Oh, man...

DON finishes his coffee, his eyes drifting out the window. He watches WINSTON pull out of the lot in his beat-up minivan. As his gaze sweeps back across the small parking area, he sees a young man hovering around outside.

A second later, DON recognizes him as THE KID he saw the night before, outside the airport near the taxistand.

The young man is wearing the same rumpled clothes and carrying the same two worn canvas bags.

After a moment of reflection, DON signals to a WAITRESS, requesting his check.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE UP ON:

EXT. LUNCHEONETTE - AFTERNOON

Exiting the restaurant, DON sees THE KID, still there, near the corner of the building.

DON looks over at him. THE KID sees DON, but then looks away, adjusting something in one of his bags.

DON walks over to him. THE KID looks up.

DON
Didn't I see you at the airport last night?

THE KID
I don't know. Did you?

DON
Yeah. (pause) You on a road trip?

THE KID
Yeah. Something like that.

DON
You look hungry. Can I buy you a sandwich or something?

THE KID
(suspicious)
Uh, no. That's OK.

DON
Hey, don't worry. I'm not gay, and I'm not a cop or anything.

THE KID studies him for a moment.

DON (cont'd)
I'm just a guy who sees another guy who might need a sandwich.

THE KID
(after a pause)
Well...OK. But can you get something to go? I'd...I'd sorta rather stay outside.

DON
To go? Sure. What would you like? A nice club sandwich?

THE KID
I'm vegetarian.

DON
You eat cheese?

THE KID
Yeah, sometimes. I like cheese.

DON
Got it. Be right back.

DON turns and walks back over to the doorway, disappearing inside the luncheonette. THE KID waits outside, looking around nervously.

After a moment, he moves off toward the edge of the parking lot, near a low wall. He places his bags on the ground in front of him, then sits down on the cement and cinderblock wall. Again he looks around nervously.

A few moments later DON reappears, carrying a paper bag. He crosses over and sits down near THE KID and begins pulling food from the bag, setting on the wall between them.

DON (cont'd)
Let's see. Here. Big cheese and veggie sandwich. With mushrooms.
(pause, their eyes meeting briefly)
Fries, extra large. Two coffees. Two waters...

THE KID unwraps the sandwich and begins eating it immediately, voraciously.

DON watches him while opening one of the coffees and taking a sip. He sees a piece of pink ribbon tied to the kid's backpack. The kid notices and glances from the ribbon back to Don.

THE KID
My mom put that there. (then looking away) For good luck.

THE KID devours half the sandwich, takes a swig from the other coffee, throws down a few fries, then starts on the rest of sandwich. He looks over at DON between mouthfuls.

THE KID (cont'd)
Thanks for the food.

DON
No problem, chief.

THE KID stops eating again and looks at DON. DON glances back at the young man, who is still skittish, but also somehow dark and interesting.

THE KID
You called me chief?

DON
Yeah. Why?

THE KID smiles to himself and continues eating. DON eats a french fry, then briefly rubs his injured eye.

THE KID
What happened to your eye?

DON
Oh. I, uh...I ran into somebody.
(pause) Somebody's fist.

THE KID takes another gulp of coffee, his eyes still on DON.

THE KID
You a gangster?

DON
(surprised)
No. I'm...I was in computers.
(pause) Computers and girls.
(pause) How about you, chief?

THE KID looks away nervously.

THE KID
I'm interested in...(looking at his shoes) philosophy.

He glances furtively at DON.

THE KID (cont'd)
Philosophy...and girls.

DON
That sounds good.

THE KID
(finally lightening up a little)
You think so?

DON nods, taking a sip of coffee.

THE KID (cont'd)
So, as just a guy who gave another guy a sandwich, you have any, like, philosophical tips or anything? For a guy on a kind of road trip?

DON
You askin' me?

THE KID, on the verge of laughing, gestures around him.

THE KID
Yeah.

DON considers the question for a few seconds.

DON
Well, the past is gone. I know that. (pause) And the future's not here yet, whatever it is. (pause) So I guess all there is is this. (pause) The present. (pause) That's it.

There's a brief silence.

THE KID
You a Buddhist?

DON
No. (pause) Are you?

Not answering, THE KID eats the rest of the fries. Another brief silence.

DON (cont'd)
Sorry, but that's really the best I can offer you at the moment.

THE KID
(not looking at him)
No, I appreciate it. (pause) I like what you said. (pause) Much better than some, like, fatherly-sounding bullshit.

DON looks at him intently, THE KID not looking back.

DON
Is that...what your father's like?

THE KID's eyes snap over on him suddenly, hard, angry, wounded. He looks away, then picks up the two bottles of mineral water and puts them inside his backpack. He takes a deep breath.

THE KID
Not a good subject.

He stands up.

THE KID (cont'd)
(curtly)
I gotta go, man. Thanks again for the sandwich and stuff.

DON takes off his dark glasses and stands up. THE KID picks up his bags and stands to turn away.

DON
Hey, uh...You...you think I'm your father, don't you?

THE KID stops in his tracks, turns and studies DON with a disturbed expression.

THE KID
What?!

DON
Just tell me. You can talk to me, chief.

THE KID takes a few quick steps backwards.

THE KID
Man, you're fucked up!

He turns and starts to run, disappearing behind the building.

DON
(to himself)
Shit.

He goes after him, pausing at the building's corner just in time to see THE KID climbing onto some garbage cans, then bolting over a tall fence and disappearing into the backyards beyond it.

DON stands there for a moment, motionless. He takes a deep breath, then turns and walks back through the parking area and out to the sidewalk bordering the street.

Pausing there, he looks up and down the street. He sees the kid disappearing around a building in the distance.

DON stands there, exhausted, dejected. A moment later, he freezes in mid-motion, his eyes locked onto a passing car.

A dented, old-style Volkswagen beetle drifts by in front of him, its front seats occupied by two scruffy young men. The one driving is silhouetted and barely visible, but the passenger, the one closest to DON, is clearly, if briefly visible.

DON is stunned as the young man's face, looking back out at him, floats past. His facial features are UNMISTAKABLY SIMILAR TO DON'S. The young man's head continues to turn, eyes locked onto DON's, as the car begins to recede.

DON, as though dreaming, steps out to the curb, his arm rising into the air in a strange almost involuntary gesture.

DON (cont'd)
(not loudly)
Hey!

He watches powerlessly as the car continues down the street, then swoops around a curve and out of view.

DON's arm drifts back down to his side.

He steps backwards up onto the sidewalk, eyes still looking off in the direction of the small Volkswagen. But it's gone.

DON stands there, looking at nothing unusual. Just the street, it's light traffic, its buildings, trees and houses, lit by the soft gray light of an ordinary late afternoon...

CUT TO BLACK.